

Elk

Contents

Issue 1: Implement a program that can be used to evaluate the potential for using hunters to manage elk hoof disease.	2
Issue 2: Add Game Management Units 272 (Beezley), 278 (Wahluke), 284 (Ritzville) and 290 (Desert) to the areas open during the general early archery elk season.....	3
Issue 3: Add Game Management Units 272 (Beezley), 278 (Wahluke), 284 (Ritzville) and 290 (Desert) to the areas open during the general early muzzleloader elk season.	4
Issue 4: Remove the “True Spike Bull” restriction during general archery seasons in Game Management Units 328 (Naneum), 329 (Quilomene), 334 (Ellensburg), and 335 (Teanaway).	5
Issue 5: Establish general archery seasons in Game Management Units 249 (Alpine) and 251 (Mission) that are consistent with other general archery seasons in the Colockum elk herd area.	6
Issue 6: Establish an early general muzzleloader season in Game Management Units 249 (Alpine) and 251 (Mission) that is consistent with other general muzzleloader seasons in the Colockum elk herd area.	7
Issue 7: Improve the boundary description of Elk Area 2032 (Malaga).	8
Issue 8: Offer special permit seasons in Elk Area 2033 (Peshastin) for antlerless and antlered elk to assist with mitigating elk damage complaints.	9
Issue 9: Limit the Master Hunter season in Game Management Unit 371 (Alkali) to the month of August, open the GMU during early and late general archery seasons, and offer modern firearm and muzzleloader special permit seasons for antlerless elk.....	10
Issue 10: Open Game Management Unit 379 (Ringold) for Any Elk during the early general muzzleloader season.	11
Issue 11: Open Game Management Unit 382 (East Klickitat) for Any Elk during early and late general archery seasons.....	11
Issue 12: Eliminate the late general muzzleloader season for antlerless elk in Game Management Unit 578 (West Klickitat).....	12
Issue 13: Create a new Elk Area in Game Management Unit 603 (Pysht) near the town of Joyce.	12
Issue 14: Allow hunters to use dogs to assist with tracking wounded big game.	13
Issue 15: Eliminate Elk Area 1040 and open the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Unit during general elk seasons	14
Issue 16: Change the legal elk in Game Management Unit 448 (Stillaguamish) during general seasons from Any Elk to 3 pt. min.	15
Issue 17: Change the hunt area for special permits associated with Elk Area 4941 (Skagit River) to include all of GMU 437 (Sauk).	16

Issue 18: Modify season dates for late general archery and muzzleloader seasons in Game Management Unit 407 (North Sound).....	17
Issue 19: Add Elk Area 5066 (Norway Pass) to Game Management Unit 522 (Loo-Wit)	18

Issue 1: Implement a program that can be used to evaluate the potential for using hunters to manage elk hoof disease.

Species: Elk

WAC(s): WAC 220-415-060

Background: With no treatments or vaccines available, efforts to reduce the prevalence and distribution of elk hoof disease are limited to lethally removing diseased elk. The Department is proposing to implement a program that will be used to evaluate the potential for using hunters to manage this disease. Importantly, the goal of this program is to increase the proportion of diseased elk within total harvest, but total harvest is not expected to increase. This program would be initiated in 400, 500, and 600 series Game Management Units, evaluated on an annual basis, and if warranted, discontinued before the 2023 hunting season. The two main components of this program are briefly outlined here, but you can review the Department’s full proposal using the link provided below.

Incentivize All Elk Hunters to Harvest Diseased Elk

The Department will create a special incentive permit drawing for hunters that harvest an elk with hoof disease. This drawing would be similar to permits offered to incentivize hunters to submit their harvest report early. The specific opportunities (season date, number of permits, hunt area, etc.) will be determined prior to this proposal being formally adopted, but the Department plans to offer multiple permits in order to create a legitimate incentive. Any hunter (*except Hoof Disease special permit*) can participate by submitting hooves from their elk harvest at a Department collection location. Hunters that submit a hoof set with at least one hoof indicating infection enter the drawing.

Hoof Disease Special Permits

The Department will create special permits within the Master Hunter special permit category that provide an opportunity to harvest diseased elk that are not identified as a legal elk during most general seasons (e.g., antlerless elk) or may otherwise not be targeted. If a Master Hunter successfully harvests a diseased elk under this special permit as their first elk, they will be issued an additional permit that would allow them to harvest a 2nd elk during the established permit season. The Department will require permitted Master Hunters to submit all four hooves from their harvest to evaluate the

effectiveness of this permit opportunity. WDFW will offer low quantities of these permits (i.e., < 20 per District).

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Incentivize all elk hunters to harvest elk with hoof disease as proposed.
3. Create hoof disease special permits within the Master Hunter category as proposed.
4. Alternatives 2 and 3.

Issue 2: Add Game Management Units 272 (Beezley), 278 (Wahluke), 284 (Ritzville) and 290 (Desert) to the areas open during the general early archery elk season.

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-050](#)

Background: GMUs 272, 278, 284, and 290 are not currently open during the general early archery elk season. Elk numbers in these GMUs are extremely low because the Department maintains liberal harvest opportunities for elk with the intent of keeping elk populations suppressed because of the potential conflict with agriculture. Allowing a general early archery season would be consistent with other general elk season opportunities in GMUs where the Department's intent is to maintain low densities of elk.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Open GMUs 272, 278, 284, and 290 during the general early archery elk season.
3. Open some of these 4 GMUs during the general early archery elk season (indicate which GMUs should be opened in the comments section).

Issue 3: Add Game Management Units 272 (Beezley), 278 (Wahluke), 284 (Ritzville) and 290 (Desert) to the areas open during the general early muzzleloader elk season.

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-050](#)

Background: GMUs 272, 278, 284, and 290 are not currently open during the general early muzzleloader elk season. Elk numbers in these GMUs are extremely low because the Department maintains liberal harvest opportunities for elk with the intent of keeping elk populations suppressed because of the potential conflict with agriculture. Allowing a general early muzzleloader season would be consistent with other general elk season opportunities in GMUs where the Department's intent is to maintain low densities of elk.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Open GMUs 272, 278, 284, and 290 during the general early muzzleloader elk season.
3. Open some of these 4 GMUs during the general early muzzleloader elk season (indicate which GMUs should be opened in the comments section).

Issue 4: Remove the “True Spike Bull” restriction during general archery seasons in Game Management Units 328 (Naneum), 329 (Quilomene), 334 (Ellensburg), and 335 (Teanaway).

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-050](#)

Background: To increase the survival of yearling bulls, harvest of bulls during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons has been limited to “True Spike” bulls in the core Colockum elk herd area (GMUs 328, 329, 334, and 335) since 2009. Since that time, yearling bull survival has increased and consistently met the Department’s management objective. The Department anticipates removing this restriction during general archery seasons would result in only modest effects on yearling bull survival. Moreover, archery hunters no longer have opportunities to harvest antlerless elk during general archery seasons in GMUs 328 and 329. Although the Department replaced some of that lost opportunity with special permit opportunities beginning during the 2020 season, concerns related to equity remain. The Department is proposing to remove the “True Spike” restriction during general archery seasons in response to those concerns.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Remove the “True Spike Bull” restriction during general archery seasons in GMUs 328, 329, 334, and 335.

Issue 5: Establish general archery seasons in Game Management Units 249 (Alpine) and 251 (Mission) that are consistent with other general archery seasons in the Colockum elk herd area.

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-050](#)

Background: The Colockum elk herd area consists of GMUs 249, 251, 328, 329, 330, 334, and 335. Currently, the only general archery season available in GMUs 249 and 251 is in GMU 249 during the early general archery season for any elk. The Department is proposing to also open GMU 249 during the late general archery season and to open GMU 251 during both the early and late general archery seasons. A legal elk during the early archery season in GMU 249 would remain any elk, while a legal elk during all other seasons in both GMUs would be consistent with other GMUs in the herd area (either “True Spike” or “Spike” depending on the outcome of Issue 4).

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Add a late general archery season in GMU 249.
3. Add an early general archery season in GMU 251.
4. Add a late general archery season in GMU 251.
5. Alternatives 2, 3, and 4.

Issue 6: Establish an early general muzzleloader season in Game Management Units 249 (Alpine) and 251 (Mission) that is consistent with other general muzzleloader seasons in the Colockum elk herd area.

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-050](#)

Background: The Colockum elk herd area consists of GMUs 249, 251, 328, 329, 330, 334, and 335. Currently, the only early general muzzleloader season available in GMUs 249 and 251 is associated with Elk Area 2051 (Tronsen) for a “True Spike” bull. Elk Area 2051 (Page 45 in 2020 Hunting Pamphlet) includes most of GMU 251 and a portion of GMU 249. It was originally created to assist with mitigating elk damage complaints, but that need no longer exists. As such, the Department is proposing to remove Elk Area 2051 from the list of areas open during the early general muzzleloader season and to include all of GMUs 249 and 251. A legal elk during the early muzzleloader season in both GMUs would be consistent with other GMUs in the herd area and remain a “True Spike” bull.

Alternatives:

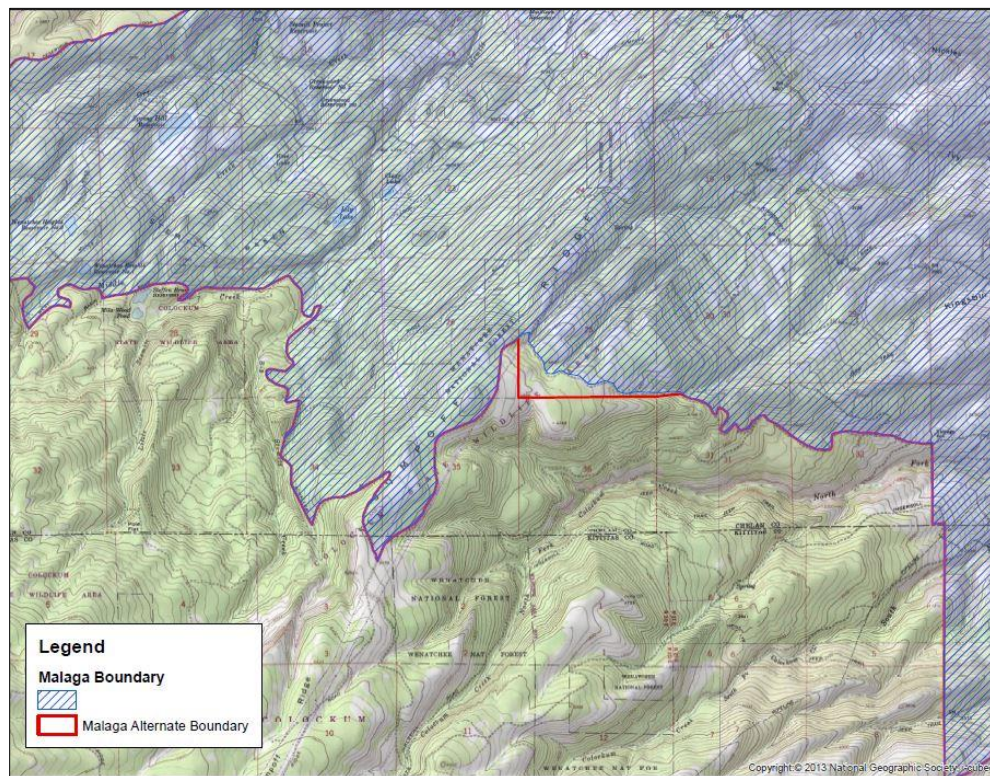
1. No change.
2. Add an early general muzzleloader season in GMU 249.
3. Add an early general muzzleloader season in GMU 251.
4. Alternatives 2 and 3.

Issue 7: Improve the boundary description of Elk Area 2032 (Malaga).

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-040](#)

Background: The current legal description and boundary follows Moses Carr Road beyond a point where this road has been closed and no longer exists, and therefore is no longer a relevant reference point. To improve clarity of the boundary and address enforcement concerns, the Department is proposing to realign the boundary along section lines as shown in the image below. This realignment would increase Elk Area 2032 by approximately 130 acres.



Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Change the boundary description for Elk Area 2032 as proposed.

Issue 8: Offer special permit seasons in Elk Area 2033 (Peshastin) for antlerless and antlered elk to assist with mitigating elk damage complaints.

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-040](#), [220-415-060](#)

Background: Elk Area 2033 is in Game Management Unit 251 (Mission) southeast of Leavenworth, WA. It was originally created to assist with mitigating elk damage complaints from local orchardists. The Department has not offered harvest opportunities in this Elk Area for several years, but conflicts with elk have increased to levels that warrant a reduction in the number of elk using this area, to include antlered elk. The Department is proposing to offer 20 special permits for antlerless elk with season dates of Dec. 15–Feb. 8 and four special permits for antlered elk with season dates of Feb. 8–17. The legal weapon for both hunts will be modern firearm. However, this Elk Area is dominated by private land and hunters will need to coordinate access with landowners, who may choose to restrict weapon choice on their property. Hunters would not be encouraged to apply for these hunts unless they can secure access to private property.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Offer special permit opportunities for antlerless elk in Elk Area 2033 as proposed.
3. Offer special permit opportunities for antlered elk in Elk Area 2033 as proposed.
4. Alternatives 2 and 3

Issue 9: Limit the Master Hunter season in Game Management Unit 371 (Alkali) to the month of August, open the GMU during early and late general archery seasons, and offer modern firearm and muzzleloader special permit seasons for antlerless elk.

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-050](#), [220-415-060](#)

Background: Nearly all of GMU 371 is comprised of public lands associated with the Yakima Training Center. The Department has historically offered liberal general season opportunities for Master Hunters to harvest antlerless elk to assist with mitigating elk damage complaints on neighboring private lands. As recently as 2019 the season dates associated with this hunt were Aug. 1–Jan. 20 but were shortened to Aug. 1–Oct. 15 for the 2020 season. The need to mitigate elk conflict issues still exists but given this GMU is mostly public land the Department feels we can use general elk hunters to mitigate elk conflicts just as effectively as we did with Master Hunters. Moreover, because of the current status of the Yakima and Colockum elk herds (both below objective), the Department had to substantially reduce general elk hunter opportunities, and this replaces some of that lost opportunity. The Department is proposing to limit the Master Hunter general season to Aug. 1-31 and to open the GMU during early general archery seasons for spike or antlerless elk. The Department is also proposing to offer modern firearm and muzzleloader special permit opportunities for antlerless elk. Specific permit numbers and season dates for modern firearm and muzzleloader special permits will be determined prior to the formal rule making process.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Limit the general Master Hunter season to August 1-31.
3. Open GMU 371 during the early archery season for spike or antlerless elk.
4. Offer modern firearm special permits for antlerless elk.
5. Offer modern firearm muzzleloader special permits for antlerless elk.
6. Alternative 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Issue 10: Open Game Management Unit 379 (Ringold) for Any Elk during the early general muzzleloader season.

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-050](#)

Background: GMU 379 is not currently open during the early general muzzleloader season. Elk numbers in this GMU are low because the Department maintains liberal harvest opportunities during the general modern firearm season with the intent of keeping elk populations suppressed because of the potential conflict with agriculture. Allowing an early general muzzleloader seasons would be consistent with other general elk season opportunities in GMUs where the Department's intent is to maintain low densities of elk.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Open GMU 379 during the early general muzzleloader season as proposed.

Issue 11: Open Game Management Unit 382 (East Klickitat) for Any Elk during early and late general archery seasons.

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-050](#)

Background: GMU 382 is not currently open during the general archery seasons. Elk numbers in this GMU are low because the Department maintains liberal harvest opportunities during the general modern firearm season with the intent of keeping elk populations suppressed because of the potential conflict with agriculture. Allowing general early and late archery seasons would be consistent with other general elk season opportunities in GMUs where the Department's intent is to maintain low densities of elk.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Open GMU 382 during early general archery seasons.
3. Open GMU 382 during late general archery seasons.
4. Alternatives 2 and 3.

Issue 12: Eliminate the late general muzzleloader season for antlerless elk in Game Management Unit 578 (West Klickitat)

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-050](#)

Background: The general season opportunity for hunters to harvest antlerless elk during the late general muzzleloader season in GMU 578 was first established during the 2018 season. Prior to that, opportunities were limited to the Department's special permit system. This change was made in 2018 to assist with the Department's efforts to mitigate damage complaints. However, this general season opportunity resulted in much more antlerless harvest than was anticipated and at levels that are not sustainable. Antlerless harvest averaged 41 elk 2015-2017 but increased to 95 in 2018 and 69 in 2019. The Department is proposing to eliminate this general season opportunity and replace it with a limited number of special permits.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Eliminate the late general muzzleloader season for antlerless elk in GMU 578 as proposed.

Issue 13: Create a new Elk Area in Game Management Unit 603 (Pysht) near the town of Joyce.

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-040](#)

Background: Conflicts with elk in the Joyce area have been increasing over the past five years. Currently there are no established seasons in GMU 603 that allow antlerless harvest. The creation of a new Elk Area and offering limited opportunities to harvest antlerless elk within that area would assist the Department with addressing conflicts, while also allowing us to maintain our current management objective of promoting population growth in other parts of the GMU. The specific type and number of permits and boundary associated with this Elk Area will be determined prior to this rule change being formally adopted.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Establish the Elk Area as proposed.

Issue 14: Allow hunters to use dogs to assist with tracking wounded big game.

Species: Elk, Deer, Moose, Bighorn, Mt. Goat

RCW(s): [77.15.240](#), [77.15.245](#)

WAC(s): [220-413-060](#)

Background: The Department frequently receives requests from hunters to allow the use of dogs for tracking wounded big game, as is allowed in many other states. Those requests are usually associated with deer and elk hunting, but it is likely to be beneficial for recovering other big game species as well. However, the Department would not allow the use of dogs to track wounded black bears or cougars to ensure compliance with RCWs 77.15.245 and 77.15.240 and WAC 220-413-060. Specific rule language allowing the use of dogs to track wounded big game will be developed prior to the formal rule making process but restrictions are likely to include:

1. Only allowed for deer, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat.
2. Only allowed during legal hunting hours.
3. Can only use 1 dog at a time.
4. Dog must always be on-leash.
5. Must occur within 72 hours of the animal being wounded

Alternatives:

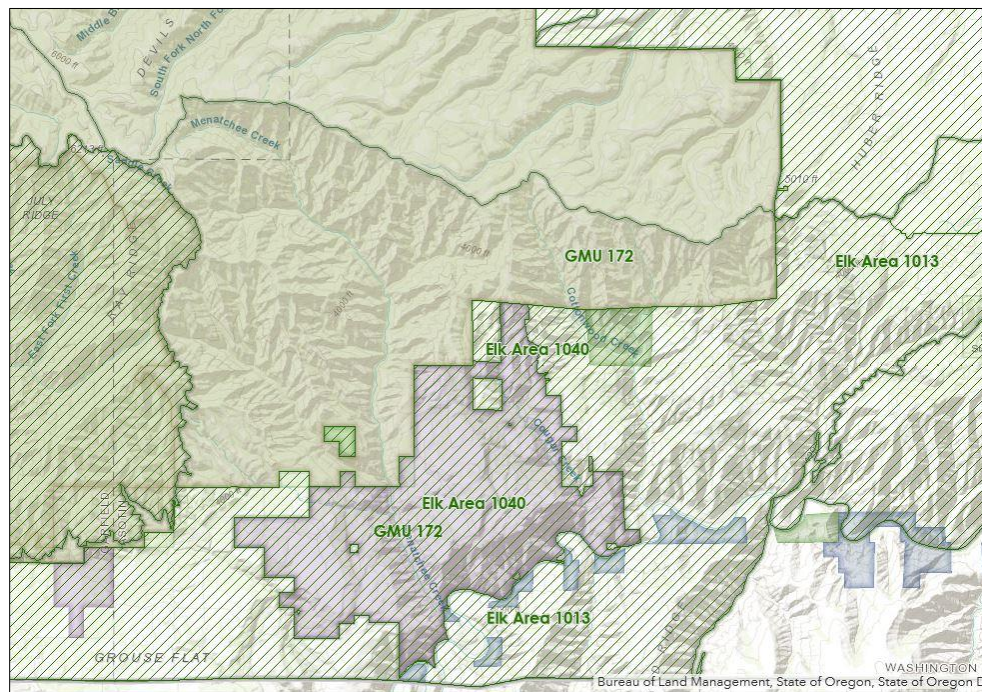
1. No change.
2. Allow the use of dogs to track wounded big game.

Issue 15: Eliminate Elk Area 1040 and open the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Unit during general elk seasons

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-040](#), [220-415-050](#)

Background: Elk Area 1040 (area shaded purple in the above image), is the area in Game Management Unit 172 (Mountain View) that is associated with lands managed by the Department as the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Unit. Since 2014, the Department has provided limited special permit opportunities within the Elk Area and excluded general season opportunities with the intent of providing a quality hunting experience. However, because Elk Area 1040 is within the ceded area of the Nez Perce Tribe, tribal hunters also pursue elk in this area. To ensure opportunities to access this area and hunt elk are similar for state and tribal elk hunters, the Department is proposing to eliminate Elk Area 1040, expand the hunt area for the special permits to GMU 172, and open the area during general elk seasons.



Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Eliminate Elk Area 1040 and open the area during general elk seasons as proposed.

Issue 16: Change the legal elk in Game Management Unit 448 (Stillaguamish) during general seasons from any elk to 3 pt. minimum

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-060](#)

Background: A legal elk during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons in GMU 448 has been Any Elk for many years because the Department's intent was to keep elk numbers low because of potential conflict with private landowners. However, a substantial portion of this GMU is forested public land and elk numbers could potentially increase in those areas without increasing conflict with landowners. As such, the Department is proposing to change the legal elk during general modern firearm, archery, and muzzleloader seasons from Any Elk to 3 pt. minimum, with the intent of minimizing the harvest of antlerless elk and promoting an increase in elk numbers. Providing opportunities to harvest antlerless elk would still be considered to mitigate conflicts when appropriate, but would be limited to the areas where conflicts occur.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Change the legal elk in GMU 448 during general archery seasons from any elk to 3 pt. minimum.
3. Change the legal elk in GMU 448 during general muzzleloader seasons from any elk to 3 pt. minimum.
4. Change the legal elk in GMU 448 during general modern firearm seasons from any elk to 3 pt. minimum.
5. Alternatives 2, 3, and 4

Issue 17: Change the hunt area for special permits associated with Elk Area 4941 (Skagit River) to include all of GMU 437 (Sauk).

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-050](#)

Background: Elk Area 4941 is located in the Skagit River Valley and represents the most northerly portions of GMU 437. It was originally created to assist with mitigating elk damage complaints, which currently includes special permit opportunities for both antlered and antlerless elk. With exception to Elk Area 4941, GMU 437 has been closed during both general and special permit elk seasons for more than two decades. Most of the elk in GMU 437 occur within Elk Area 4941, but they do occur in other parts of the GMU and at levels that could sustain limited special permit opportunities. As such, the Department is proposing to change the hunt area for special permits currently offered in Elk Area 4941 to include all of GMU 437. The Department would continue to mitigate elk damage complaints using antlerless harvest opportunities when deemed appropriate, but those opportunities would be facilitated through the issuance of landowner or Master Hunter permits.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Change the hunt area for special permits associated with Elk Area 4941 to include all of GMU 437.

Issue 18: Modify season dates for late general archery and muzzleloader seasons in Game Management Unit 407 (North Sound).

Species: Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-060](#)

Background: The late general archery (November 25–January 20; 57 days) and general muzzleloader seasons (November 25–December 15; 21 days) in GMU 407 for Any Elk currently overlap and occur for an extended period to assist with elk damage complaints. The Department is proposing to change the season dates so they no longer overlap and to reduce season length since elk damage complaints have declined. This would include a late general archery season that would occur November 25–December 15 (21 days) and a later general muzzleloader season that would occur December 16–31 (16 days). If adopted, this proposal would 1) simplify the hunting regulations because season dates would be the same as those other western WA GMUs, 2) decrease the potential for hunter safety issues that now may exist with the current overlap of hunting methods, and 3) potentially increase the quality of the hunt experience for users of each hunting method by reducing the number of hunters in the field during each period.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Change season dates during the later general archery season in GMU 407 as proposed.
3. Change season dates during the late general muzzleloader season in GMU 407 as proposed.
4. Alternatives 2 and 3.

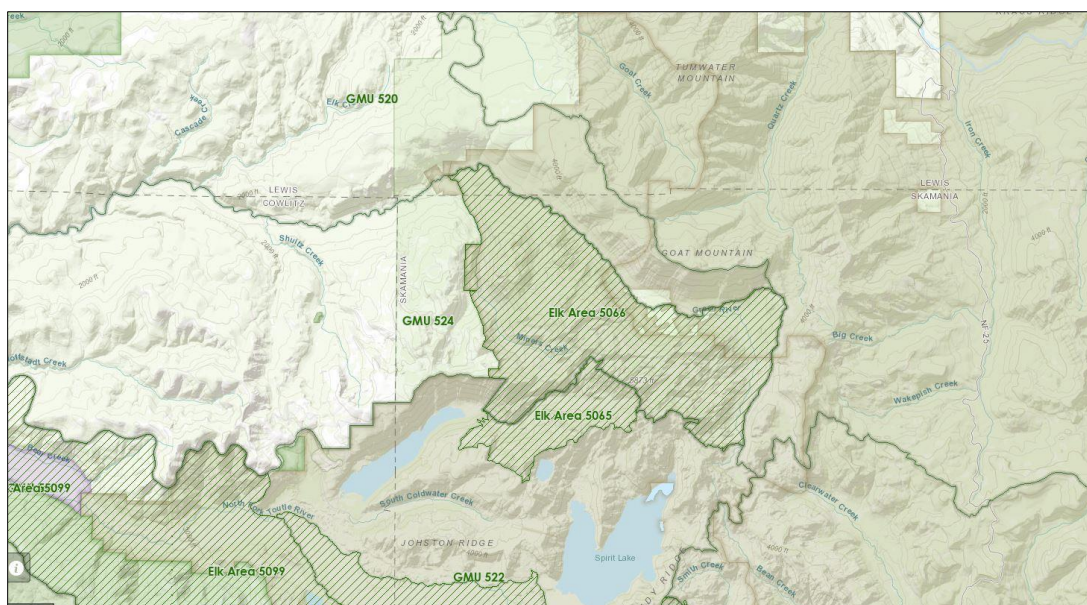
Issue 19: Add Elk Area 5066 (Norway Pass) to Game Management Unit 522 (Loo-Wit)

Species: All game species

WAC(s): [220-410-050](#), [220-415-040](#), [220-413-180](#)

Background: Currently, Elk Area 5066 (see image below) represents the eastern portion of GMU 524 (Margaret) and opportunities to hunt elk in this Elk Area are limited to special permit opportunities. Elk Area 5066 also represents that portion of the Mount Saint Helens National Volcanic Monument (Monument) that is within GMU 524. Hunters can currently hunt in this area during general seasons for other game species (e.g., black bear, grouse, cougar, deer, etc.).

This proposal seeks to remove Elk Area 5066 from GMU 524 and add it to GMU 522 because it would assist with clarification and enforcement of elk hunting regulations in the Monument. However, GMU 522 is currently closed to all hunting and trapping except for hunting elk and mountain goat by special permit holders during established seasons in designated areas. As such, hunters that have pursued game species other than elk or mountain goat would no longer be able to do so unless the Department also made modifications to the rule that prohibits these activities in GMU 522 (WAC 220-413-180).



Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Add Elk Area 5066 to GMU 522 and retain the current rule that would only allow hunting for elk and mountain goats during established permit seasons in Elk Area 5066.
3. Add Elk Area 5066 to GMU 522 but modify the current rule to allow opportunities to hunt all game species within Elk Area 5066.